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73-1897

CH/PPB

13 April 1973

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Reverse Fitness Reports

FROM: The Junior Officers' Study Group*

1. Since its inception, the CIA has viewed evaluation as something superiors do to subordinates. This memorandum outlines the need for evaluation of managerial performance and potential by subordinates and fellow workers. Such evaluation would supplement present procedures. We feel that this approach would be particularly valuable at this time, when the Agency is scrutinizing the performance of employees at all levels. For brevity's sake, we concentrate on evaluation of first-line managers--usually branch chiefs. In the broadest context, however, we believe all employees could evaluate their immediate supervisor.

2. The CIA has tended to reward those who have highly developed substantive or operational capabilities with supervisory positions whether or not they have an aptitude for management. The limited alternatives for rewarding substantive competence has meant that capable professionals must move into staff or supervisory slots in order to advance. Their ability to motivate and train others is often a secondary consideration. Too frequently they make poor managers and, at the same time, no longer have time for substantive work.

*An Annex describing the Group and listing previous memoranda is attached.

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3. The system functions, but the Agency employs many ineffective managers:

- who fail to maintain substantive command of the data for which the branch is responsible;
- who tightly control the flow of data, rigidly imposing a branch position and refusing to allow constructive dissent;
- who exploit subordinates as research assistants and fail to delegate responsibility;
- who fail to take an interest in the careers of subordinates;
- who fail to understand how to motivate people.

At present, there is no accepted, efficient way of correcting or replacing such managers. In most cases, the branch chief enjoys autonomy as long as the division chief is pleased with the staff's performance. Our study on grievance procedures has shown that subordinates are reluctant to complain through normal channels for fear of reprisal, but discontent exists and ultimately can affect production.

4. Reverse fitness reports would enable branch chiefs to learn what their subordinates think of their performance and would enable division chiefs to assess more accurately the leadership ability of the branch chiefs. We are not, of course, suggesting that this would be the only input in judging a branch chief's performance--simply that this is a significant input ignored by the current system.

5. Similar considerations apply to lateral evaluation of individuals at pre-managerial grade levels--usually GS-13--by their immediate fellow workers of all grade levels. Colleagues can often assess more accurately than can a branch or division chief whether or not an individual would be able to mobilize the efforts of subordinates. Such evaluation would also signal to higher levels of management if an individual is considered particularly unsuited for a supervisory role by close colleagues.

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6. Although we are not offering a specific format for reverse fitness reports, we have discussed the advantages and hazards of a variety of procedures.

- If the reports are sent only to the manager's superior, they may be ignored if they refute the superior's assessment.
- If the evaluation is anonymous, it is difficult to assess the objectivity of the subordinate.
- If the evaluation is not anonymous, subordinates may not feel free to express their true feelings.

7. We urge the CIA to consider the evaluation of managers by their professional and clerical subordinates and evaluation by their fellow workers of all employees who are being considered for managerial positions. To accomplish this, the Agency should:

- provide evaluation guidelines for each component;
- send signed copies of reverse fitness reports to the manager's supervisor, who would be required to use them in preparation of the manager's fitness report after consultation with the manager;
- send copies to career development officers in the front office of the component to be used when the manager is being considered for promotion or rotation;
- consider reverse fitness reports as a pilot project along with wider application of the new fitness report formats under consideration in several offices;
- require greater discussion between supervisors and subordinates of the strengths and weaknesses of each and how their working relationship can be improved.

STATINTEL

